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Congress of the United States House of Representatives

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March 5, 2018

The Honorable Ben Carson
Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20410

Dear Secretary Carson,

Living conditions at the Hudson Housing Authority's (HHA) Bliss Towers project have deteriorated well beyond livable. HUD is aware of this building's many issues, yet the situation continues to worsen on the agency's watch.

On August 11, 2017, HUD's Real Estate Assessment Center (REAC) conducted a physical inspection of HHA's five buildings including Bliss Towers, which occurred nearly eight months after HUD had decided the site needed a visit. I have attached for you the inspection report, which reviewed 23 of HHA's 135 residential units. In this sample size, HHA received a 54/100 failing grade marked by 35 health and safety deficiencies, of which 13 are considered life threatening. It was projected that if the entire building were inspected, the review would have resulted in 153 health and safety deficiencies. An additional in-depth inspection contracted by HHA with The Inspection Group, Inc. yielded a 14 out of 100 score for the property.

I recently visited this housing facility and witnessed for myself vulnerable citizens living in an exceedingly unsafe and uninhabitable environment. My staff and I have been in contact with HUD representatives from your Buffalo Field Office, but it is still unclear how HHA's condition was permitted to get to this state. Moreover, I am concerned that the regional HUD representatives have not responded appropriately to the deplorable conditions at HHA. For example, when I spoke to HUD representatives in January, Bliss Towers still had not been inspected by a HUD engineer. Following this conversation, HUD notified my office on February 15 that the agency would not be sending an engineer. In addition, it is my understanding that recent emails by HHA's new Executive Director, Tim Mattice have gone unanswered.

It is unacceptable that Bliss Towers has been allowed to reach its current state and continues to decline each day. I have spoken directly with Executive Director Mattice and have learned that he has already reached out to HUD with detailed information on HHA's urgent problems as well

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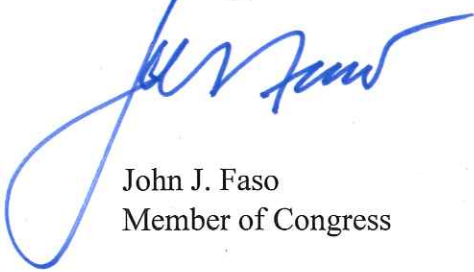
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as a request for HUD to conduct an entity-wide audit of HHA's financials, tenant files, procurement, and use of public housing funds over the last three years. I urge HUD to fulfill this audit request to help HHA operate in full compliance of federal regulations.

In addition to an audit, I also request a meeting with you to personally discuss conditions at Bliss Towers and the unresponsiveness of the Buffalo regional office staff. I hope to work with your agency and HHA on solutions that will protect the at-risk constituents living in Bliss Towers and stabilize its operations. Please have the appropriate HUD staff reach out to my Chief of Staff, John Billings (202-225-5614) so that we can arrange a meeting and work together to address this urgent matter. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



John J. Faso
Member of Congress